



UNLEASH
THE
ATHLETE

Mastering Team Building Activities for Athletes

James Leath

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Zip Zap Zip

The goal of this activity is to react fast with the appropriate response.

Group Size:

5-15

Materials Needed:

None

Set up:

Eye contact is important in this game. To set this game up, walk them through the pattern of Zip Zap Zop, having them repeat after you a few times.

Then, have them do it while also clapping in front of them, pointed at the person across from them.

- Athlete A finds someone across the circle (Athlete B) claps toward them and says "Zip!"
- Athlete B finds someone across the circle (Athlete C) claps toward them and says "Zap!"
- Athlete C finds someone across the circle (Athlete D) claps toward them and says "Zop!"

This continues until someone says the wrong word. When someone messes up, the proper response is for everyone to clap and cheer for him and her. It is meant to increase the positivity and energy in the group.

The next level is to change the first letter of the words. For example, Zip turns to Lip, Zap turns to Lap, and Zop turns to Lop.

The final level is to allow anyone to change the first letter at any time, so long as the order of words is not messed up

Alone in the Attic

The goal of this activity is to pay attention to what the person does before you so you can copy it exactly.

Group Size:

10. After 10, the activity begins to drag on.

Materials Needed:

A room to roam around in.

Set up:

Everything is imaginary. There are no props or actual doors. Athlete #1 enters the attic through the side of the room, walks over to an area, does something, then returns to where he or she came from, and exits.

Athlete #2 imitates exactly what Athlete #1 did, adds on an activity, then leaves.

The remaining athletes imitate what the previous athletes did, adds something of their own, then exits.

Once an athlete completes their visit to the attic, they become the sound effects person for the next athlete.

What to look for:

This is a memory game. Look for players that are paying attention to the details.

Call out a player that did something especially detailed from an athlete before them.

Discussion Question:

Why is it important to pay attention to the details?

How does watching someone do something and imitating them make us a better athlete? Or, what pro athlete do you try to imitate?

One Word Story

The goal of this activity is to work as a team to tell a story, increasing listening skills and putting to use the team's collective creativity.

I have seen this activity used in many different settings, from theater, to sports, to the boardroom. It is a great warm-up activity to get the creative juices flowing. It is very heavily based on the "yes, and" theory of improv in that as long as the word is grammatically correct, then the next person should accept the word and add on to the story.

I like this activity because it flows like a soccer or lacrosse game would. When an athlete is passed the ball, it would be very awkward if to whom it was passed rejected the pass! Instead, be ready to accept and add to the situation, even if it isn't perfect or how you thought it should be.

Group Size:

3+

Materials Needed:

None

Set up:

Get the team organized into a circle. First, ask for a location, maybe a place that doesn't exist, like an ice cream melting factory, or somewhere most everyone on the team knows about. Then, ask for a name. Once you have those two items, and everyone understands them, let them know we are going to make up a story, one word at a time. The story ends when someone says, "the" and the next person says, "end".

Chose an athlete to start, then one word a time, let them make up the story.

What to look for:

If the story starts getting out of hand, pause the story and recap what is happening. Remind them that every story has a setup, climax, then a resolution.

Discussion Question:

How does this apply to our sport? How important is it for a teammate to accept the situation and add value, as opposed to getting upset about what a teammate did?

Also, this might be a good time to bring up the fact that no one on the team wants the team to lose, so why they make a mistake, it is not intentional.